

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Department of Health



COLIFORM

Frequently Asked Questions

NOTE: In an effort to keep the public informed and educated about the District's water supply, the Health Department is providing the following frequently asked questions.

Q: Is the District's water safe?

A: Based on current evidence, the water supply is safe. No general "boil water" alert is necessary. However, special populations such as those with severely compromised immune systems (AIDS), cancer patients (chemotherapy), frail elderly people, and families with infants under the age of two months, should ask their doctors if they should take extra precautions such as boiling water.

Q: What are total coliform bacteria?

A: Total coliform bacteria, often called "coliforms", are a kind of germ most commonly used to identify contaminated drinking water. Finding coliforms in water suggests there **MAY** be some water contamination and therefore a need for further testing.

Q: Is coliform a health threat?

A: Coliform is not a health threat in itself. It is used to indicate whether other potentially harmful bacteria are present. Currently, **NO** harmful bacteria have been found in the District's water supply.

Q: Is the District's level of coliform high?

A: Yes. Recent tests have found elevated levels of total coliform bacteria in the District's water supply. There is no evidence that anyone in the District has become sick from the water.

Q: Will a water filter work to keep coliform bacteria out of my water?

A: Residents must review the water filter's manufacturer's guide to determine its effectiveness against coliform bacteria.

Q: How will I know if my water becomes unsafe?

A: Your water system is required, **by law**, to notify you if your water is not safe. In addition, the Department of Health will continue to inform you about any changes in water quality that are important to your health.

FOR ADDITIONAL HEALTH INFORMATION, CONTACT THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AT 202-671-0733 OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.dchealth.dc.gov.